

HARVARD SQUARE

Bike lane construction halted after businesses raise concerns

By Adam Sennott

Cambridge@wickedlocal.com

The city will hold a discussion over concerns raised by the business community regarding new bicycle lanes being built near Harvard Square.

The City Council voted Monday to hold a meeting at a later date with residents, business owners, and members of the inter-faith community following a recent rollout of protected bike lanes on Brattle Street. Several councilors said they received complaints from business owners who were not aware that the bike lanes were being installed and that they were having a negative impact on their operations.

Within the initial

order, Mayor Denise Simmons called for holding off on bike-lane construction for 30 days until the meeting takes place and a report is filed. As a result, the biking community felt the city was abandoning bike safety and flooded Monday night's council meeting, sitting on the floor for the whole seven hours.

Simmons said the cycling community misunderstood her intention.

"I think there's been some misinformation out there," Simmons said. "And the misinformation has sort of gotten exacerbated."

Simmons said her intention was never to call for a moratorium on bicycle infrastructure.

"Over the weekend I saw a number of emails and social

media posts suggesting that it was a tactic to dismantle the city's biking infrastructure, or was a plot to enact an open-ended moratorium," Simmons said. "And that, again, was not at all true."

Simmons said it was an opportunity to have a conversation about favorable work the city has done to protect bicyclists.

"I don't think anyone on this council, certainly not me, is interested in undoing that," Simmons said.

Councilor David Maher said he was "a little bit taken aback" by the public response to the proposed meeting.

"The council has been unanimously supportive of looking at new ways to increase safety for bicyclists

in the city," Maher said.

Councilor Leland Cheung said he received a "torrent of emails" from people that thought the city was going to stop building protected bike lanes.

"I didn't read the same thing in the order that was being said in the emails," Cheung said. "When people write in saying things that don't appear true, or that don't reflect what I'm reading in front of me, it discounts your message."

"I would advocate a little bit of jurisprudence and fact checking before kind of rushing to ring the bell for alarm," Cheung said. "Because I think this council has a clear priority in terms of making sure we get to Vision Zero, [and] adding bike lanes."